

Brown's Battery Breaking

EPA Region 3

Pennsylvania

Berks County

Tilden Township

near the town of

Shoemakersville

EPA ID# PAD980831812

17th Congressional District

Last Update:

August 2002

Other Names:

None

Current Site Status

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the cleanup of the Brown's Battery Breaking hazardous waste site, which has been carried out by the Exide Corp., the potentially responsible party, or PRP. Exide Corp. recently declared bankruptcy, which has caused EPA to take over the construction activities for the cleanup. So far, approximately 46,000 tons of contaminated soil and battery casings were treated on site to render them non-hazardous, and then they were transported to off-site landfills. Treatment and disposal activities were shut down for the winter, though an additional 25,000 tons of treated material was temporarily stored on the site. EPA took over the soil cleanup and began transporting the treated soils to off-site landfills beginning in August 2002. The final 15,000 tons of contaminated soil and battery casings will be treated and disposed during the fall and early winter of 2002 by EPA. EPA is evaluating Exide's role in the future cleanup activities, and is evaluating various enforcement options

to ensure that the cleanup is completed in a timely manner.

Site Description

The Brown's Battery Breaking site, in Shoemakersville, Berks County, Pennsylvania, is a 14-acre abandoned battery recycling facility that was operated from 1961 to 1971. Three families were living on the site when the state discovered elevated levels of lead in children living in these residences. EPA then studied the site and found soil and surface water contamination. There is a fence around the perimeter of the site to restrict public access. The site is bordered by Conrail tracks to the west, the Schuylkill River to the southeast, and Mill Creek to the southwest. It lies within the flood plain of the Schuylkill River. Approximately 220 people live within one-mile of the site. There are 1,000 people within three miles of the site who depend on groundwater for drinking water supplies. Two private residential wells are located on site and used as a drinking water source. The adjacent Schuylkill River is used as a potable water source, as well as for recreation.

Site Responsibility


Cleanup of this site is being conducted and payed for by the party responsible for site contamination, under oversight by the EPA.

NPL Listing History

Our country's most serious, uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites can be cleaned using federal money. To be eligible for federal cleanup money, a site must be put on the National Priorities List (NPL). This site was proposed to the NPL on October 15, 1984 and formally added to the list on June 10, 1986.

Threats and Contaminants

The groundwater is contaminated with lead from former site operations. Nickel and zinc, as well as lead, have contaminated the soil. The Schuylkill River is used for recreation and as a municipal water source and may become contaminated during periods of flooding. People who come in direct contact with ingest contaminated groundwater or come in direct contact with soil may be at risk.

Contaminant descriptions and associated risk factors are available on the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, an arm of the CDC, web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hazdat.html> 

Cleanup Progress

In 1983, EPA temporarily relocated the three families living at the site. Contaminated soil and battery casings were moved to a containment area and were covered with a low permeability cap. Also, the primary disposal area was fenced. In 1990, EPA decided to permanently relocate three residences and a business, and Exide Corp. began the process under EPA's monitoring. In early 1993, EPA completed relocations of all residents and one business. The remaining business left the site when the cleanup commenced.

In late 1991, EPA completed a study of the soil, debris, and groundwater contamination, and identified cleanup methods that could be used at the site. EPA selected a method in mid-1992, calling for treatment of all soils containing lead levels above 1,000 ppm, using an innovative thermal treatment technology, similar to incineration. If the innovative technology was not feasible, a contingent method, on-site stabilization with off-site disposal, was also selected. On March 31, 1998, EPA determined that the innovative technology was not feasible and the contingent method would be used instead. Exide Corp. recently declared bankruptcy, which has caused EPA to take over the current construction activities.

Contacts

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Detailed public files (Administrative Record) on EPA's actions and decisions for this site can be examined at the following locations:

Hamburg Public Library
35 North Third Street
Hamburg, PA 19526

U.S. EPA Region III
6th Floor Docket Room
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-814-3157

Please call for an appointment.